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# How the Abandoned Kurds Lost Out

In an ordinary brick house in the Washington suburbs, the proud and dauntless leader of a fierce mountain people spends his days visiting with friends and laboring to learn the English language. Every few weeks, he visits the Mayo Clinic for treatment for the cancer that is ravaging his lungs.

He is Gen. Mustafa Barzani, the grizzled, 75-year-old commander-in-exile of the Kurds, who used to roam the rugged mountains where Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and the Soviet Union come together. Now, most of his people have been deported in small groups to the deserts of Iraq and dispersed throughout remote regions of Iran.

The unfortunate tribesmen became pawns on Henry Kissinger's chessboard in 1972. They were manipulated and then abandoned. Today, the powers-that-be in Washington act as if they would like the Kurds to fade away.

The Kurds lost out because of Washington's strange love affair with the shah of Iran. In the early 1970s, he was embroiled in border and navigation disputes with Iraq, and he felt threatened by Iraq's close relationships with the Soviet Union. He thought it strategically wise, therefore, to stir up the ancient, simmering struggle between the Kurds and the Iraqis.

In May, 1972, the shah pressed Kissinger and his boss, Richard Nixon, to arm the Kurds against the Iraqis. Despite CIA resistance, the White House pair agreed to the shah's scheme. Following orders, the CIA smuggled \$16 million worth of untraceable Chinese and Soviet weapons through Iran to

the Kurds. They fought the Iraqis to a standstill.

But in March, 1975, the shah abruptly announced he had patched up his differences with Iraq. Overnight, American support for the Kurds dried up, and, without weapons, the mountain men were overpowered. Thousands were killed or wounded; thousands more fled into Iran as refugees.

Gen. Barzani flew to the United States to plead with Nixon and Kissinger for humanitarian help for his beleaguered people. The American leaders, who had abandoned him on the battlefield, refused to acknowledge any obligation. They ignored his appeals.

Our sources say they refused assistance in deference again to the shah, who distrusts the Kurds and prefers to keep them subjugated. He has tried to conceal, meanwhile, the ruthless manner in which he exploited them.

Eventually, a token 700 Kurdish refugees were admitted to the United States. Kurdish leaders were instructed to keep quiet about even this minor gesture. Like the shah, the United States doesn't want to advertise its crass intrigues in the Iraqi highlands.

The Kurds who arrived in the United States were granted no special privileges. They were sponsored by international refugee organizations, which gave them personal loans to pay their air fares and expenses. Some were thrown into resettlement camps in San Diego. Later, they were actually asked to pay for their "care and main-

tenance" at the camps.

Although the Kurdish refugees, for the most part, are educated and skilled, many had difficulty with the English language and had to take low-paying jobs. Dozens of them remain unemployed. Nevertheless, they are receiving aid letters from their sponsoring organizations.

One letter from the Tolstoy Foundation, for example, warns a refugee that non-payment of his loan "may cause you difficulties in your permanent residence in this country."

The refugees from other U.S. foreign policy flops, on the other hand, are treated royally. Over \$1.3 billion has been lavished on Cuban refugees since 1961. And some \$455 million, according to congressional sources, has been spent to help Indochinese refugees resettle in this country.

For the Kurds, the State Department reached into its petty cash and scraped up a paltry \$150,000, which was used to help finance the United Nations Kurdish refugee program. Congressional leaders, meanwhile, have ignored the Kurds' plea for funds to help them resettle.

As part of his daily routine, Gen. Barzani musters his energy to dictate a few letters asking for help. Twice he has written to President Carter. Once, he received a short response from the National Security Council advising him to talk to the State Department. On another occasion, he received a two-sentence note from a presidential aide who assured the general that his "interest" in the Kurdish problem "is appreciated."